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ABSTRACT

In order to consider the study of human communication from an interpretive perspective, this paper addresses two questions: (1) What count as data? and (2) What do data count as? The paper's first section reviews the 1977 Symposium issue of the Western Journal of Speech Communication to identify what constitutes legitimate human communication research according to prominent specialists in the field, and asserts that the "criteria for evidence" (what count as data) proposed in that issue are still widely accepted by human communication theorists and researchers. The paper's second section describes the interpretive approach as composed of three basic ideas (the researcher as the instrument of inquiry; the preeminence of humane considerations; and an ahypothetical study design) and finds a general consensus in the community of human communication specialists as to what count as data. The final section of the paper, dealing with the question "What do data count as?", makes the contrary case, contending that what data count as is more personal than consensual, and that this is consistent with the interpretive approach. The work of neuropsychologist Howard Gardner is used to demonstrate the impact of an individual (the researcher as the instrument of inquiry) on the manner in which the evidence of research is construed. Thirty references are attached. (SR)

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AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO HUMAN COMMUNICATION STUDY

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Abstract

Two questions ground this essay: (1) What count as data? and (2) What do data count as? These two questions provide a framework for considering the study of human communication from an interpretive perspective.

The 1977 Symposium Issue of the Western Journal of Speech Communication is used to identify what constitutes legitimate human communication research according to prominent specialists in the discipline. It is asserted that the "criteria for evidence" (what count as data) proposed by these authors in 1977 are still widely accepted by human communication theorists and researchers. Consequently, the articles by Cronkhite and Liska, B.A. Fisher, Delia and Grossberg, and T. M. Scheidel in the Symposium Issue of WJSC provide a means of demonstrating the utility of the interpretive approach presented in this essay.

Three basic ideas constitute the interpretive approach discussed in this essay: (1) the researcher as the instrument of inquiry; (2) the preeminence of humane considerations; and (3) ahypothetical study design. These basic ideas derive from common knowledge in our discipline, and imply what are commonly called naturalistic or participant observer techniques. What count as data in terms of the interpretive perspective presented here is shown to be compatible with what count as data (evidence) for the speech communication discipline generally.

However, when it comes to the question What do data count as? the contrary case is made; that is, what data count as is more personal than consensual. And this is particularly amenable with the interpretive approach to human communication study discussed in this essay. The work of neuropsychologist Howard Gardner is used to demonstrate the impact of one's person (the researcher as the instrument of inquiry) on the manner in which the evidence of research is construed.

AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO HUMAN COMMUNICATION STUDY

The purpose of this essay is to consider the study of human communication from an interpretive perspective. To do this, two questions will be addressed: (1) What count as data? and (2) What do data count as?[1]

What Count As Data?: WJSC, Winter 1977

In the Winter of 1977 the Western Journal of Speech Communication devoted an entire issue to the question: "What criteria should be used to judge the admissibility of evidence to support theoretical propositions regarding communication research?"[2] In my opinion, this is the same as our first question: "What count as data?" Consequently, the articles in this issue of WJSC are a suitable starting point for the present discussion. It seems to me that the principles articulated by these authors in 1977 continue to be widely accepted and advocated by communication theorists and researchers in 1987. Therefore, a look at these articles will give us what certain well-known specialists in the discipline take to be legitimate data for the study of human communication generally. Then, the characteristics of data particularly amenable to an interpretive perspective may be identified.

To be expedient, summary statements abstracted from the WJSC articles are enumerated by author or authors below. Remember, "criteria for evidence" and "what count as data" are treated as equal in these statements.

Cronkhite and Liska

1. Epistemics, not techniques, are important when judging the admissibility of evidence (i.e., what count as data) (p. 5).

2. Theoretical propositions are to be part of a system (i.e., somehow related) (p. 7). Therefore, data within a specific domain of inquiry are to be compatible and coherent if they are to count.

B. Aubrey Fisher

3. "Evidence from any method is eminently admissible" (p. 12). So, what count as data (evidence) are not determined by method of inquiry.

4. The source of communication data must be considered within the theoretical framework that serves to explain the communication event (p. 12). So, theoretical perspective influences what count as data.

5. No single paradigm or perspective characterizes the field. Instead, there are competing perspectives (p. 12). What count as data, then, are not limited to a dominate point of view or a prevailing theoretical perspective.

6. The rationale for scholarly inquiry rests on conceptual/theoretical orientation, not on a survey of past empirical studies (p. 18). So, what count as data come not from a litany of past work but from a defensible theoretical orientation.

7. The criteria Fisher enumerates for the admissibility of evidence may also be taken as criteria for what count as data.

> a. "Is the evidence [data] consistent with the conceptual/ theoretical rationale guiding the study?"
>
> b. "Is the evidence [data] consistent with the research question?"
>
> c. "Is the evidence [data] consistent with a central focus on human communication?"
>
> d. "Is the evidence [data], the analysis, and the conceptual/ theoretical orientation supported by rational argument which justifies the worth of the question, its position in the theory, and its contribution to theoretical development?" (p. 18)

Fisher stresses the first of these four criteria. So, again, what count as data are data that are consistent with a conceptual/theoretical framework or rationale.

8. Fisher makes a case for multiple perspectivism and argues that evidence or what count as data are to be judged on the basis of the validity of the theoretical perspective (p. 18).

Thomas M. Scheidel

9. Scheidel asserts that evidence and the criteria for judging it varies with the phases of inquiry. So, what count as data depends on where one is in the investigative process.

10. Scheidel observes that we are trained early on to accept the assertions of authorities (p. 20), and that we rarely have access to "basic data" or "first level evidence" (p. 22). Consequently, what count as data are often what a perceived authority stipulates and makes available as data.

11. Scheidel also observes that we learn to see and believe what we find comfortable to see and believe (p. 20). Therefore, what count as data are often determined accordingly.

12. Scheidel argues "that the person of the researcher very often is the evidence" (p. 22). In other words, what count as data are frequently what the personal inclinations of the researcher dictate, all the more so if this person is a respected authority who is emulated by other researchers.

13. Scheidel's belief that scholarly inquiry is more an activity than an accomplishment and his subsequent assertion that researchers must know subject-matter prior to theory (p. 23) means that what count as data are expected to be compatible with a process view of inquiry and a "hands on" approach to evidence.

14. This process view of inquiry has Scheidel stipulating the interdependence and circularity of careful observation, theory development, and prediction testing (p. 24). As we know, he concludes from this process view of inquiry that the standards for evidence vary depending on what phase of investigation is being conducted. Generally, standards are more relaxed during the empirical observation phase and most formal and rigorous during the prediction testing phase. Standards for evidence are less crucial during the theory development phase. At this

point in the research cycle, creative mental activity is more important (pp. 27-29). So, once again, if we continue to equate evidence with data, Scheidel is telling us that what count as data depends on the phase or activity within the theory research cycle that the investigator is involved with.

Delia and Grossberg

15. Evidence/data "ought to be good." By this Delia and Grossberg mean that it should be "reasonable, relevant, shared, etc." All other criteria for evidence/data are "to be made within a particular framework by a community with a shared theoretical perspective" (pp. 34-35). Therefore, Delia and Grossberg, like B.A. Fisher, assert that one's theoretical perspective or framework is a fundamental influence on criteria for evidence or what count as data.

16. Delia and Grossberg conceptualize the person as "interpretive beings" who are "agents of action" and who constitute "human social reality." Consequently, what count as data are abstracted from an intersubjectively created social world, contextually bound for its participants and thus meaningful for them prior to any investigative intervention (pp. 35-37).

17. For data/evidence to count, Delia and Grossberg believe that it must reflect (i.e., take into account and account for) the deep, intersubjective meaning structures of individual and collective life-worlds (pp. 37-38).

18. Delia and Grossberg make the following suggestions for capturing the "density of meaning in lived communicative experience" (p. 38). What they are suggesting is, in effect, what they believe count as data when conducting human communication research.

> a. Carry out inquiry in accordance with systematic interpretive theory. According to Delia and Grossberg, theory defines the kind of data to collect (i.e., what count as data). Without a theoretical perspective the research enterprise and the results/outcomes that are generated lack coherence and meaning. (p. 38)
>
> b. Make certain that the data collected according to a particular theoretical orientation is a reflection of the "personal and social meaning-structures" constituted by the participants themselves. Persons naturally structure their experiences into coherent life-scripts. It is important, Delia and Grossberg assert, not to "impose analytic techniques" onto the social context being observed. Allow the lived experience and deep-meaning structures of the social interactants to express and represent themselves. In other words, data that count emerge naturally, organically, emically, intrinsically from the lived experience of the persons one seeks to understand. Data does not derive, in the view of Delia and Grossberg, from preconceived conceptual systems imposed on evolving social scenes. (p. 39)
>
> c. Data come into being through the scientific process of "deconstructing" and "reconstructing" the social world. So, what count as data or what data count are the products

> of abstraction. Delia and Grossberg point out that the "first act of abstraction" is the very act of data collection itself. What count as data, then, depends on the abstraction process of deconstructing and reconstructing social phenomena within the contexts of particular theoretical points of view. (p. 39)

19. What count as data are data that retain to the greatest possible extent "the pre-theoretical meaning structures of the original events" (p. 39). Any means (e.g., open-ended responses to posed situations, audio/video recordings of talk, participant observation and detailed fieldnotes) that achieve this to a sufficient degree, are, according to Delia and Grossberg, a legitimate method of inquiry.

20. So, data that count, in Delia and Grossberg's view, are data grounded in the "lived experience of the human world," data that preserve the "density of meaning" and the "complexity of communication in human life" (p. 42) -- an approach to human communication study they term "reflective empiricism."

*

B. Aubrey Fisher, Thomas M. Scheidel, Grossberg and Delia, and Liska and Cronkhite also provide some follow-up commentary for their articles in the Winter 1977 issue of WJSC. They do this by considering the articles collectively and, in some instances, comparatively. They reaffirm what they have written in their principal essays and extend their previous remarks.

B. Aubrey Fisher

21. Fisher begins by pointing out the central position of "theoretical orientation" in all three principal articles (p. 43). What is admissible as evidence, what count as data, is inevitably influenced by the researcher's theoretical perspective.

22. According to Fisher the "form" of a theory is much less important than the "rational procedures by which conceptual problems are dealt with in a developing science" (p. 44). So, what count as data or what data count are data that are rationally coherent, that make logical sense for a particular community of investigators with regard to a particular context of inquiry.

23. Fisher believes, on the basis of the sociality of knowledge, that the value of a theory depends on its acceptance and use within the scientific enterprise. What count as data, then, is a matter of consensus. Data constitute theory and are, in turn, constituted by the actual, public, and collective activity of researchers. Data are "good" to the extent that communication specialists agree that they are "good" (pp. 45-46).

24. Fisher reaffirms his advocacy of multiple perspectivism. He does not believe that one research perspective is inherently more "correct" or "true" than another. And he suggests that "usefulness" might work well as a criterion for judging a research perspective (p. 47). It seems obvious that the same can be said about data and what makes it count. If data depend on theoretical perspective and if theoretical perspectives are not inherently superior or inferior, then what count as data are not privileged in a particular and inherent way either. And data that count are data that have utility.

25. According to Fisher, rational argument is an important aspect of human communication study. Consequently, rhetoric -- in the sense of making a case -- plays a key role in determining what count as data (p. 48). Data are accepted as data on the basis of cogent and convincing argument.

Thomas M. Scheidel

26. After recapitulating that tests of evidence -- what count as data -- are not absolute but must be, instead, compatible with the research question and level of inquiry (p. 50), Scheidel makes two recommendations: (a) that, as communication specialists, we acknowledge and use our rhetorical heritage as a way of improving communication theory and enriching the discipline (p. 51) and (b) that as communication researchers we assume more responsibility "for establishing the claims of [our] evidence" (i.e., what count as data). Scheidel wants the procedures and results sections of research reports expanded so that more context of particular research projects is made available to the reader (p. 52).

27. Scheidel closes his follow-up commentary by asserting that "the self plays a more significant role in the process of scientific inquiry than we usually acknowledge" (p. 52). Here he is in the company of Gregory Bateson (1979, see below). What count as data, then, to a significant degree, may be personal and individual as well as social and consensual.

Grossberg and Delia

28. In their closing remarks, Grossberg and Delia write: "Theoretical constructs, whether reflectively or naively held, constitute an essential set of abstractive principles constituting the very essence of the research enterprise" (p. 55). These authors are affirming, then, the centrality of theoretical constructs -- and the implication that they be consciously held -- with regard to what count as data when conducting human communication research. They also believe that data that count can be the product of Fisher's "multiple perspectivism" as long as the "spectre of an irrational relativism" is avoided (p. 55).

29. Grossberg and Delia reassert their commitment to "reflective empiricism," a research protocol which consciously retains "its originary relationship to human experience," and they recommend that data be structured as little as possible while it is being gathered (p. 56). In their view, what count as data is evidence that reflects its connection to the "life-world" of those in the context of inquiry, in addition to being "compelling and convincing within the schemes of rationality employed within a particular scientific community" (p. 56). These two characteristics of data, the second of which includes the essentialness of theoretical constructs, stipulate what make it count for Grossberg and Delia.

Liska and Cronkhite

30. Liska and Cronkhite believe that the scientific enterprise provides a culture with myths that serve as survival mechanisms for coping with and adapting to the environment. As such, science is social; it is embedded in society. Furthermore, the researcher and the object or context of

investigation constitute a reflexive relationship -- each influences and is influenced by the other. According to these authors, research is fundamentally "the human intelligence trying to make sense of what it observes" (p. 63). Consequently, this perspective gives us a broad view of what count as data; namely, any evidence that allows the human intelligence to make sense. Liska and Cronkhite conclude their follow-up article with the recommendation that human communication research "be conducted according to certain generalized standards or criteria not specific to any one epistemology" (p. 65). In other words, the standards for judging evidence are to be, so far as possible, given the various disciplines and domains of inquiry, consensual and universal. What count as data, then, are not determined by a particular way of knowing or making sense.

*

The 30 summary statements enumerated above provide an adequate response to our first question -- What count as data? -- with regard to human communication study generally. But before we can decide whether some of these criteria for evidence or data are especially compatible with an interpretive approach to the study of human communication, we must first describe what is meant in this instance by an interpretive approach.

Description of Interpretive Approach

Let it be understood that this description of an interpretive approach to human communication study is simply one of a number of possible descriptions. It is derived from common knowledge in our discipline, and it implies what are commonly called naturalistic or participant observer techniques. Three basic ideas constitute the interpretive approach discussed here: (1) the researcher as the instrument of inquiry; (2) the preeminence of humane considerations; and (3) ahypothetical study design.

Researcher as the Instrument of Inquiry

It is vitally important that the researcher keep in mind, by realizing the selectivity and idiosyncrasies of personal perceptions, the intimate connection between one's self and what one "sees." The researcher must responsibly work out and realistically assess the relationship between one's role as an observer and the phenomena observed. The participant observer strives, while maintaining a proper measure of spontaneity and reserve, to be acutely sensitive to the influences which shape impressions and make them individually and uniquely experienced. An attempt is made, for example, to cultivate an awareness of the discernible characteristics of one's physiology, one's nervous system, and the predispositions of one's psyche, one's psychology.

Gregory Bateson (1979) sketches the limits of this self-examination. In a discussion of the term "consciousness," he notes:

> I prefer to use that word, not as a general term,
> but specifically for that strange experience whereby
> we (and perhaps other mammals) are sometimes
> conscious of the products of our perception and thought
> but unconscious of the greater part of the processes.
> (footnote, p. 87)

As Bateson suggests, although the processes of perception itself are not cognitively accessible, the link between these processes and their outcome (i.e., perceptions) is inescapable. What the researcher must do, then, is acknowledge this connection; that is, say in effect: "I accept this information given me in the form of my perceptions even though I cannot directly know the manner in which this information is processed and organized," and be consistently mindful of this whenever perceptions are translated into the research materials derived from a particular communication context because it constrains what otherwise might be taken as an objective analysis of certain communication phenomena. W. Barnett Pearce (1977) underscores this point when he writes:

> Psychological studies of perception and philosophical analysis of theoretical statements converge on the conclusion that the knower is inextricably part of what is known. Summarizing a classic series of studies of social perception, Ittelson and Cantril [1954] stated that "the world as we experience it is the product of perception, not the cause of it"[p. 5]. In philosophy, Hanson [1958] has demonstrated that observation is "theory-ladened": what an observer knows or believes -- his "theory," no matter how inarticulate -- structures what he sees. (pp. 51-52)

Others write in a similar vein. For instance, William James (Allen, 1967) believed:

> A philosophy is the expression of a man's intimate character, and all definitions of the universe are but the deliberately adopted reactions of human characters upon it.... If we take the whole history of philosophy, the systems reduce themselves to a few main types which, under all the technical verbiage in which the ingenious intellect of man envelops them, are just so many visions, modes of feeling the whole push, and seeing the whole drift of life, forced on one by one's total character and experience, and on the whole <u>preferred</u> -- there is no other truthful word -- as one's best working attitude. (p. ix)

And Bateson (1979), with a remark expressing the same sentiment as Scheidel's observation above (summary statement 27), asserts: "But epistemology is always and inevitably personal. The point of the probe is always in the heart of the explorer..." The theme of these quotations, of course, is the seemingly simple and obvious realization that "the knower is inextricably part of what is known" (cf. Dewey and Bentley, 1949). How we take ourselves and how we take our world is a function of who we are, and our perceptions and interpretations arising from our experiences are mediated and shaped by our sensory apparatus, the processes of which are essentially unfathomable because they are out of our awareness.

The challenge, then, is to interfere <u>consciously</u> as little as possible. Glenn Jacobs (1970), in the Preface to his anthology <u>The participant observer</u>, considers this issue. He writes about "not interposing anything between ourselves and the objects of our inquiry," and he puts the case as follows:

> We interpret the hallmark of science, empiricism, literally; that is, we take it to mean what some writers call surrender of the self to the phenomenal world so that our experience of it is circumscribed as little as possible. I am not suggesting that we cast out the standard scientific criteria of relevance, internal consistency, replicability, objectivity, and so on. I mean simply that these should not be idolatrized, for they are merely tools ancillary to ourselves as research instruments [emphasis mine]. To the extent that we cannot escape participating in the experience of those we observe, we must always more or less be participant observers. (pp. viii-ix)

It must firmly be kept in mind, however, that "[a]lthough the scientist can thus acquire directly some sense of the subjective states of the participants, this sense remains his own and cannot merely be assumed to correspond to that of others" (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 5). So, whatever the details and given strategies of investigation, the participant observer cannot realistically dismiss that our perceptions (i.e., the interpretation of sensory stimuli) are subject to the conditions of our embodiment.

The researcher who realizes this must also acknowledge personal projections onto the social setting/communication context under scrutiny. "[I]t is certainly a part of our consciousness," writes Julian Jaynes (1976), "to 'see' into the consciousness of others, to identify with our friends and families so as to imagine what they are thinking and feeling" (p. 5). The importance of intersubjectivity is undeniable, but the investigator must consistently be wary of imputing motive and/or internal state to another solely on the basis of perceived behavior. Too much identification with the participants renders one especially prone to attributing more, in terms of interpretation and explanation, than is warranted and makes prudent the use of multiple sources of information (e.g., informants, interviewing, and document analysis). Cognizance of the researcher as the instrument of inquiry forces us to recognize that we are at least once removed from immediate experience and direct knowledge; that we are denied, by the conditions of our existence, unencumbered insight and total understanding of the world in which we live.

Consequently, it is important that the assumptions that underlie the reported evidence and interpretations of our observations be identified and communicated. What this means is that the interpretive researcher becomes perennially concerned with context. In addition to continuously monitoring his or her own predispositions while conducting research (i.e., regularly asking: "What is my part in these occurrences?"), it is necessary to conscientiously detail the circumstances being studied. The materials and reported findings of naturalistic inquiry must be carefully placed in context. For the interpretive researcher engaged in the research of human communication, this crucial importance of context leads to the frequent use of probabilistic statements whenever an attempt is made to generalize from uniquely occurring situations.

Preeminence of Humane Considerations

Obviously, the quality of evidence generated by an interpretive researcher while in the field depends on the nature of the relationships established with the people who comprise the communication setting being investigated. Rapport is essential. Representative descriptions and insightful interpretations are not possible without it. But too much rapport -- to the point of intimacy, perhaps -- can be as detrimental as too little. Both extremes influence what the researcher experiences in a manner that may comprimise personal impressions and distort reported observations. There are no hard-and-fast rules for determining exactly how much empathy (i.e., to what extent one identifies with participants) and how much reserve (i.e., to what extent one keeps an "analytic eye") the researcher is to integrate as observer and interpreter. The researcher's experience and skill, in conjunction with the particular context being investigated, is the final arbiter of this issue.

There is, however, a simple attitude that is integral to the interpretive approach discussed here; namely, that the people one seeks to understand are not to be treated impersonally, that their integrity as individuals be honored, and that humane considerations are always to have precedence over the intents of any research enterprise (see Bowers & Courtright (1984, pp. 295-299) for another expression of the humane point of view with regard to human communication inquiry). Theodore Roszak (1969) concurs with this attitude. He is critical of impersonal inquiry and the privileged position it gives to the investigator:

> As soon as two human beings relate in detachment as observer and observed, as soon as the observer claims to be aware of nothing more than the behavioral surface of the observed, an invidious hierarchy is established which reduces the observed to a lower status. (p. 222)

Roszak deplores the "gross impertinence" of "detached observation" and the assumption that the researcher has the right to reduce a person to an "integer" in the name of science. The clear implication is that researchers strive to appreciate the world of others experientially as well as intellectually, that responsible inquiry requires more than detached observation. This is a difficult task if the persons who populate communication contexts of interest are made into "things," if they are objectified and manipulated. Consequently, to investigate and learn about others it is recommended that the researcher somehow participate in their lives and be what Geertz (1973) calls a "sensitive observer." Properly done, research of this kind may yield narrative accounts rich with description and interpretation.

Ahypothetical/Naturalistic Study Design

The manipulation of variables receives little, if any, attention from the participant observer/interpretive researcher. Even though hypotheses may be proposed and/or tested, and systematic and repeated observation is important, a priority of this research technique is reportorial description and qualitative analysis or interpretation (cf. Pearce, 1977 and Philipsen, 1977).

For instance, it is typically more important to concentrate on patterns of interaction in an effort to identify the dynamics of relationships and reach

some knowledge with regard to what is unique about the communicating taking place. Too many preconceived ideas acted on in the setting can impede the researcher's ability to experience the world-at-hand in a manner as similar as possible to those he or she seeks to understand, bearing in mind, of course, that interpretive inquiry is not bound to this this particular ideology. The primary effort is to view the entire milieu, the whole context of interest, as comprehensively and integratively as circumstances allow. William Sims Bainbridge (1978), referring to the traditions of the sociology of religion, writes: "I happen to believe that it is most fruitful to step back ... and look at the phenomena afresh simply as social phenomena to be interpreted and explained in terms of very general principles" (p. 10). This idea is consonant with the interpretive perspective outlined here. General or global approaches are legitimate research protocols for human communication study. It is important that there be a cadre of investigators who provide wide-ranging and principally descriptive accounts of human communication phenomena. Formal propositions, in most cases, are not stated and tested. Instead, interpretive remarks pertaining to particular communication events are given in narrative form. Without accounts of this nature it is impossible for there to be deeper interpretation and comparative analysis.

What Count As Data?: Interpretive Perspective

What count as data? can now be discussed from an interpretive perspective. A way to begin is by considering some of the summary statements that are especially resonant with interpretive inquiry as described in this essay.

Ahypothetical Is Not the Same As Atheoretical

The authors summarized above state the importance of a theoretical framework or system. The investigation of human communication phenomena is most fruitful, they assert, if there is a coherent theoretical rationale guiding the processes of inquiry (see, for example, summary statements 2, 4, 7a, 15, 18a, 21).

The interpretive perspective described in this essay is fully compatible with this view. To appreciate this it is necessary to realize that ahypothetical does not mean atheoretical. Research protocols which begin with broad questions about human communication occurrences are typically refined during the various phases of inquiry precisely because of a particular theoretical orientation. This theoretical orientation, whatever its distinguishing characteristics may be, often emerges (i.e., shows itself) gradually during the course of investigation. Consequently, ahypothetical approaches are, potentially at any rate, truly investigative in that the chances of uncovering unexpected information are high. Traditional hypothesis testing, on the other hand, is often more a demonstration or confirmation of what the researcher already knew or suspected (Fisher, 1978).

Of course, both kinds of inquiry are important and necessary. Hypothesis testing and ahypothetical approaches complement one another. The point of these remarks, once again, is that ahypothetical study design is not the same as atheoretical inquiry. The interpretive perspective described here

implicates the importance of a coherent point of view informing the conduct of human communication study. The presupposition that most assures this coherence, without guaranteeing it, is the stipulation acknowledging that the researcher is the instrument of inquiry and, consequently, subject to the contingencies of being human. Two of these contingencies are rationality and face.

Rationality and Face

Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978) construct for the purpose of investigating politeness phenomena what they call, "tongue in cheek," the Model Person. They write:

> All our Model Person (MP) consists in is a wilful fluent speaker of a natural language, further endowed with two special properties -- rationality and face. By "rationality" we mean something very specific -- the availability to our MP of a precisely definable mode of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends. By "face" we mean something quite specific again: our MP is endowed with two particular wants -- roughly, the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects. (p. 63)

These characteristics of Brown and Levison's Model Person may be used to describe, in part and if not pushed too far, the interpretive researcher.

Rational self-consciousness (i.e., the researcher as the instrument of inquiry) is the fundamental presupposition of the interpretive perspective discussed in this essay. The recommendation of ahypothetical study design and the observation that the researcher's theoretical orientation may realistically and legitimately become explicit during the various phases of investigation are closely related ideas and follow intuitively from the basic, commonsense premise that the researcher is the instrument of inquiry. It has already been noted that the authors surveyed emphasize the importance of a theoretical orientation when conducting human communication research. One of the cornerstones of a convincing theoretical orientation is rationality in the terms given by Brown and Levinson; that is, "a precisely definable mode of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends" (p. 63).

The interpretive perspective presented here relies heavily on the researcher's ability to successfully make the case for a particular line of inquiry. Rational means-to-ends procedure, as identified by Brown and Levinson and credited to Aristotle, is still one of the most effective ways to make a persuasive case. Most human communication specialists give considerable credence to rational and, therefore, convincing argument that demonstrates how reasonable steps including, I'd like to add, leaps of imagination and intuition, were taken to reach supportable knowledge claims. Fisher (1977) succinctly expresses this sentiment when he writes: "Is the evidence, the analysis, and the conceptual/theoretical orientation supported by rational argument which justifies the worth of the question, its position in the theory, and its contribution to theoretical development?" (p. 18) (summary statement 7d). (See also Hart, 1986; and Motley, 1986.)

Like other human beings, interpretive researchers have face. Both dimensions apply; that is, what Brown and Levinson call "negative face" or "the want to be unimpeded" and what they call "positive face" or "the want to be approved of in certain respects" (p. 63). Keeping in mind that this part of our discussion derives from the presupposition that the researcher is the instrument of inquiry, we can see that some of Scheidel's remarks pertain to the issue of face. When he observes, for instance, that we are trained to accept the assertions of authorities (summary statement 10) and that we learn to see and believe what we find comfortable to see and believe (summary statement 11), he is implying the idea of negative face.

Most researchers want to be as unimpeded as possible while conducting their investigations. It seems natural to want procedures to go smoothly. Clearly, many of the frustrations and disappointments of human communication inquiry are associated with the infinite number of potential obstacles that may be encountered (e.g., the failure to secure funding, or uncooperative gatekeepers, or unsympathetic colleagues, and so on and so on). Investigators are often more exasperated by the trivial and mundane mishaps endemic to the research enterprise than by the failure to demonstrate, let's say, the plausibility of a proposition or the inability to write a narrative that adequately conveys the communicative implications of a particular human context. It is not surprising, then, that "easy" ways are sometimes sought and that "quick and dirty" studies are sometimes undertaken. Although there are certainly other contributing and legitimate factors, such as the expectation that one add to the existing body of knowledge, nagative face does influence research protocol.

Granted, we have probably applied this term more loosely and generically than Brown & Levinson (1978). Nevertheless, it can certainly be suggested that researchers expect some degree of "right of way" while conducting their investigations just as they do during the course of their other activities. Interference of a human and social nature while carrying out inquiry constitutes a breach of negative face -- a kind of bad manners. Therefore, the simple acceptance of assertions made by perceived authority figures and a tendency to incorporate into one's theoretical perspective or perspectives what can easily be accommodated are reasonable methods, it can be argued, of striving to maintain negative face or not be impeded during the conducting of inquiry.

Positive face is also important. Actually, positive face probably exerts more influence on the motives for conducting research than negative face. While there may be some researchers who are genuinely uninterested in any recognition and/or appreciation of their work, it is exceedingly more likely that most of their colleagues do not share their indifference. In fact, "the want to be approved of in certain respects," if excessive, can have detrimental affects on the conducting of inquiry. Under these circumstances, the strengthening of one's credentials becomes more important than the quality of one's research and, once again, "quick and dirty" studies may be the result.

For the most part, however, it appears that positive face operates in a way that enhances the research enterprise. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong or unethical about a "proper measure" of positive face. A certain amount of competitive spirit, which may derive from positive face, can enliven our attempts to make sense of human experience and increase our understanding of social/communication phenomena. The

possibility of being respected by one's colleagues for well-conceived and well-conducted research encourages investigators to make what they know public, and adding information to the public domain benefits the process of inquiry. Although this human dimension of inquiry may be undesirable from a dispassionate point of view, research is, afterall, a human activity. Consider this by Bowers and Courtright (1984):

> Science is a human enterprise, and scientists have human foibles. Personality, credibility, social networks, and rhetorical skill all affect the progress of science. For scientists, the method is not its own reward. Like others, they seek fame, prestige, fortune, and even affection both inside and outside the community of scientists. (p. 28)

Still, even though this human characteristic -- "the want to be approved of in certain respects" -- may be labeled a human foible and overindulged by a few individuals, the community of researchers in general seems to sustain its integrity.

Philosophical Anthropology

The philosophical anthropology of Delia and Grossberg is congruent with the interpretive perspective discussed in this essay. The importance of a theoretical perspective, "reflectively or naively held" on the part of the investigator, noted by these authors and their observation that data are created through the "deconstructing" and "reconstructing" of the social world point to a recognition of the researcher as the instrument of inquiry. Delia and Grossberg acknowledge, then, the personal and reflexive dimension of human communication research.

Furthermore, what Delia and Grossberg write about gathering data and the priority of preserving the "density of meaning" in the "lived experience of the human world" (summary statement 20) openly implicates the use of unobtrusive research methods and is directly related to the principle of the interpretive perspective presented here having to do with the preeminence of humane considerations when conducting inquiry. It is obvious from their remarks that naturalistic or participant observer techniques are legitimate ways to attempt to discover/uncover "the pre-theoretical meaning structures of the original events" (summary statement 19) inhering in the human communication contexts under study. It is also apparent that the "reflective empiricism" advocated by Delia and Grossberg holds the persons who populate communication contexts of interest in high esteem. Descriptive terms such as "interpretive beings" and "agents of action" who are capable of creating "social reality" (summary statement 16) ascribes integrity to the person and precludes, in principle at least, condescending treatment by the researcher.

Finally, rationality, in the sense of sound rhetorical argument, and grounded theory assumptions, in the sense of not imposing "analytic techniques," are two other common points of reference for the philosophical anthropology of Delia and Grossberg and the interpretive perspective presented in this essay. Delia and Grossberg stipulate that social scenes are inherently coherent by virtue of the meaning structures that are originated, sustained, altered, and abandoned by the participants, and that these meaning structures are meaningful for those who enact

them prior to formal inquiry (summary statement 16). The attempt to preserve this coherence by gaining access as unobtrusively as possible to how persons do their communicative lives and then re-presenting it with as little distortion as achievable is compatible with ahypothetical study design and humane considerations. Ahypothetical study design lends itself to unobtrusive or naturalistic methods of inquiry and the two together follow from a respect for the person and a humanistic attitude. Also, re-presenting the substance of one's inquiry relies, in part, on rhetorical skill; that is, the ability to make a case for a particular piece of research that is "compelling and convincing within the schemes of rationality employed within a particular scientific community" (summary statement 29).

In short, the research approach of Delia and Grossberg and the interpretive perspective discussed in this essay possess common points of reference. Their "reflective empiricism" contains statements that pertain to the presupposition that the researcher is the instrument of inquiry and to the principles of humane considerations while conducting research and the usefulness of ahypothetical study design.

Survival Myths

Cronkhite and Liska have not been considered as extensively as the other authors because their role as the editors of the 1977 symposium issue of WJSC makes the nature of their commentary different from the remarks of the contributors. Their main task was to set the agenda and raise some issues for the respondents to address. Despite this, however, it is evident from the three summary statements abstracted from their opening and closing articles that a portion of what they write can be associated with the interpretive approach to human communication study presented here.

For instance, when Liska and Cronkhite describe the research process as "the human intelligence trying to make sense of what it observes" (summary statement 30), they are certainly implying rationality and giving emphasis to the idea of the researcher as the instrument of inquiry. The connection between this idea and what Liska and Cronkhite write is even more direct when they point to the reflexive relationship between the researcher and the object or context of inquiry (summary statement 30).

Furthermore, characterizing the scientific enterprise as one way a culture provides itself with survival myths (summary statement 30) is especially compatible with the interpretive perspective discussed in this essay. Myths are stories and research reports are a particular kind of story. These stories or narratives (see Walter R. Fisher [1987] for an explication of the "narrative paradigm") provide ways for a culture to comprehend human experience and thus have survival value. Interpretive research, because it typically relies so heavily on descriptive accounts, is generically a kind of storytelling. Some of these stories become especially pervasive as survival myths for a culture. (Two obvious examples are Darwin's Origin of the Species and Einstein's theories of relativity.)

Finally, when Cronkhite and Liska give priority to epistemics, not techniques (summary statement 1) and recommend that human communication research "be conducted according to certain generalized standards or criteria not specific to any one epistemology" (summary

statement 30), they are including ahypothetical research design as a legitimate means of inquiry. And when they state that theoretical propositions should be systemically related with one another (summary statement 2), they imply a research approach that accommodates the organic, naturalistic, interconnected character of the interpretive perspective described in this essay.

Summary: What Count As Data?

It has now been demonstrated that there are a number of common points of reference between the interpretive approach to human communication study described in this essay and the 1977 WJSC symposium issue articles by prominent communication specialists. The fundamental presupposition that the researcher is the instrument of inquiry and the two principles pertaining to humane considerations and ahypothetical study design are compatible with much of what Cronkhite and Liska, B. Aubrey Fisher, Thomas M. Scheidel, and Delia and Grossberg write in their articles. Equating their discussions of what criteria should be used to judge the admissibility of evidence with regard to theoretical propositions in communication research and our first question about what count as data has permitted us to explore a particular theoretical perspective.

Some of the issues addressed to this point in our discussion include: the importance of a coherent theoretical orientation; the concept of rationality which follows from the presupposition that the researcher is the instrument of inquiry and the emphasis this gives to the personal dimensions of research; the compatibility of ahypothetical study design and naturalistic/participant observer research techniques with the intention to explore human communication phenomena as unobtrusively as possible; the idea that there is no one paradigm informing communication study but rather a number of competing paradigms; the humanistic attitude that respects the integrity of the persons one seeks to understand; the assertion that ahypothetical study design is not the same as atheoretical research; the crucialness of sound rational argument when it comes to designing, conducting, and presenting research, and how this may be especially important with regard to descriptive accounts of human communication occurrences; the fact that the researcher is subject to the sociality of communication study and consequently influenced by human factors such as positive and negative face and the reflexivity inherent in human beings trying to make sense of human experience; the idea that the research process is one way a culture provides itself with myths that help it adapt and survive; and so on.

It isn't necessary to enumerate each of the themes touched upon in our discussion to suggest a very simple conclusion: What count as data for the researcher employing the interpretive approach to human communication study described in this essay is the same as what count as data for other communication specialists using different perspectives and methods of inquiry.

It is a rare individual who opens up an entirely new and radical way of investigating human communication phenomena. Most of us practice our profession by exploring the issues given us by the discipline. We come to these issues through the normalization process of graduate school where our instructors and the appropriate professional journals make us aware

of what constitutes legitimate research. Experimental researchers (who typically make use of statistical studies), critical researchers (who often conduct library research into historical issues), and interpretive researchers (who characteristically investigate contemporary communication episodes in naturally occurring situations) usually pursue research programs that give what they study currency within the discipline. (For an idea of what some of these research issues are, see Appendix A in Bowers and Courtright [1984, pp. 315-345]).

So, once again, when it comes to the question What count as Data? there is a general consensus in the community of human communication specialists. While particular research perspectives may predispose investigators toward favored techniques and contexts of inquiry, these perspectives do not necessarily discriminate investigators in terms of what count as data. Researchers generally agree on what constitutes communication study. It is quite a different matter, however, when it comes to the question What do data count as?

What Do Data Count As?

Scheidel's remark about how the person of the researcher very often is the evidence (summary statement 12) gives us entry to this part of our discussion. It acknowledges the researcher as the instrument of inquiry and recognizes that human factors influence communication study. There is little doubt that personal characteristics, genetic and cultural, shape the "human intelligence" as it goes about the task of "trying to make sense" of what it encounters. It can be argued that the ways data are interpreted and understood (i.e., what they count as) are affected more by the uniqueness of the individual researcher than the decision concerning what count as data. It has already been suggested that what count as data in most instances for the majority of communication researchers is more consensual than personal. It will now be suggested that when it comes to our second question What do data count as? the converse is more true; that is, what data count as is more personal than consensual.

Howard Gardner

To demonstrate the impact of one's person on what data count as we now take a somewhat protracted look at an aspect of the work of Howard Gardner.

Howard Gardner (1983) writes about the different kinds of intelligences manifested through certain specific human capabilities. He argues "that there is persuasive evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intellectual competences...." that "can be fashioned and combined in a multiplicity of adaptive ways by individuals and cultures..." (pp. 8-9). He makes a case for multiple human intelligences and thus seriously questions the equating of IQ scores, which reflect only a particular kind of cognitive or mental skill, with overall intellectual ability. The IQ issue is not our concern here, however. What does pertain to the present discussion are the specific intelligences identified and elaborated by Gardner. But before mentioning these specific intelligences, it is useful to review some of the background information provided by Gardner. A knowledge of the process leading Gardner to posit the existence of identifiable human intelligences, besides being intriguing in its own right, is also an argument for the multiplicity of ways human communication researchers interpret the evidence/data of their inquiries.

Gardner observes that

> [O]ne strand of scientific psychology has searched for the most general laws of human knowing -- what might today be called the principles of human information processing. An equally energetic area of study has searched for individual differences -- the distinctive profiles of abilities (and disabilities) in individuals. (p. 15)

Gardner (1983) reviews intelligence testing, the work of Piaget, and the "information processing approach" as past and present ways of attempting to comprehend the phenomena of human intelligence (pp. 14-24). And it is the shortcomings of these approaches -- namely that "all focus on a ceratin kind of logical or linguistic problem solving; all ignor biology; all fail to come to grips with the higher levels of creativity; and all are insensitive to the range of roles highlighted in human society" (p. 24) -- that convinces Gardner to take as his own bias a "symbol systems" perspective with regard to the study of human intelligences. He reminds us that Ernst Cassirer (1953-1957), Susanne Langer (1942), and Alfred North Whitehead (1938) stressed the importance of symbolic aptitude for sharply distinguishing human beings from other organisms, and he points out that "[s]ymbol use has been key in the evolution of human nature, giving rise to myth, language, art, science; it has also been central in the highest creative achievements of human beings, all of which exploit the human symbolic faculty" (p. 25). According to Gardner and his colleagues, then, much of what is unique about the human intelligences may be understood in terms of the "deployment" of the various symbol systems (p. 25). And not only do human beings distinguish themselves from other living organisms by virtue of the ability to use symbols, but the various symbol systems themselves, Gardner argues, also distinguish one person or culture from the next and provide insight into the different kinds of human intelligence. He writes: "[A] pivotal issue concerns the definition and delineation of particular symbolic domains. Proceeding in terms of logical considerations, one can effect discriminations among specific symbol systems" (p. 29). Gardner believes that "deep knowledge" of the human nervous system is crucial, that when it comes to an understanding of symbolic domains brain function is the final arbiter (p. 30).

Consequently, Gardner gives an important place to biology in the investigation and understanding of human cognitive functioning and symbolic domains. This emphasis leads him to conclude that

> [t]here is considerable plasticity and flexibility in human growth, especially during the early months of life. Still, even that plasticity is modulated by strong genetic constraints which operate from the beginning and which guide development along some paths rather than along others. As for the issue of identity, <u>evidence is accumulating that human beings are predisposed to carry out certain specific intellectual operations</u> (emphasis mine) whose nature can be inferred from careful observation and experimentation. (pp. 32-33)

Gardner reminds us that genetics enter into the formation of an individual.

A consideration of genotype and phenotype is important with regard to an individual's behavioral and intellectual profile (p. 33). But the kind of information that appears conclusive varies. What can be said about the various characteristics of an individual from a genetic perspective must be qualified according to the specific characteristics in question. Physical traits seem the most definitive. Cognitive and personality traits appear less anchored genetically. Gardner emphasizes this qualification in the following manner:

> There is considerable argument that physical traits are most straightforwardly genetic, that aspects of temperament are also largely genetic; but that when it comes to aspects of cognitive style or personality, the case for high heritability is far less convincing. (p. 35)

However, neurobiology (e.g., neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and neuropsychology), rather than pure genetics, is more promising with regard "to phenomena of cognition and the mind" (pp. 36-37).

Gardner (1983) discusses canalization or determination and plasticity. "[C]analization refers to the tendency of any organic system (like the nervous system) to follow certain developmental paths rather than others" (p. 37). Plasticity refers to the flexibility of organic systems, "an equally amazing facet of biological development" (p. 38). These two concepts are important for understanding neural growth and development (pp. 37-38), especially when it comes to the acquiring and refining of the various human intelligences. But the nature and amount of plasticity and canalization exhibited by organic systems are constrained by a number of factors so that Gradner concludes that

> [a]n emerging consensus insists that each species -- including ours -- is specially "prepared" to acquire certain kinds of information, even as it proves extremely difficult,if not impossible, for the organism to master other kinds of information. (p. 39)

There are several developmental principles that appear to hold for organic systems. Gardner discusses five. (1) Maximum flexibility or plasticity is encountered early in life. Early damage may often be accommodated. Damage occurring later during the developmental process often results in noticeable deviation from the expected outcome because "the relevant cells will either connect randomly or atrophy altogether" (p. 40). (2) Critical periods exist during the process of development. Each capability of an organism (e.g., sight) seems to have a time table for optimal development. Irreversible effects may take place if interference occurs during these critical times. On the other hand, rapid development may ensue if conditions are especially good (p. 40). (3) Amount of flexibility depends upon the region of the nervous system in question. Gardner writes: "Regions that develop later in childhood, such as the frontal lobes or the corpus callosum, turn out to be more malleable than those that have developed in the first days and weeks of life, such as the primary sensory cortex" (p. 40). (4) An organic system will not develop properly "unless it undergoes certain experiences" (p. 41). For example, visual development in a cat, Gardner explains, will be thwarted if not exposed to patterned light

stimulation after birth (p. 41). And (5) Injury to the nervous system differs in terms of effect. Some injuries are immediately evident, the effect of others show up later depending upon the developmental phase of the injured area. Gardner observes: "Thus, injuries to the frontal lobes in primates may not be detected during the first years of life but may become all too manifest at a later time when the animal is expected to carry out those complex and organized forms of behavior that are ordinarily mediated by the frontal lobes" (p. 41).

After his discussion of these five principles, Gardner (1983) asserts:

> Determination (or canalization) helps to ensure that most organisms will be able to carry out the functions of the species in the normal way; flexibility (or plasticity) allows for adaptability to changing circumstances, including anomalous environments or early injuries. (p. 42)

So neurobiology appears more revealing than genetics with regard to the delineation of symbolic domains and the functioning of human intelligences (p. 48). For instance, when it comes to the organization of the brain, Gardner presents evidence (pp. 52-56) that leads him to observe:

> We find, then, an emerging consensus about brain localization. The brain can be divided into specific regions, with each emerging as relatively more important for certain tasks, relatively less important for others. Not all or none, by any means: but with definite gradients of importance. In the same vein, few tasks depend entirely on one region of the brain. Instead, once one examines any reasonably complex task, one discovers inputs from a number of cerebral regions, each making a characteristic contribution. (p. 54)

Gardner believes that scrutiny of the nervous system may possess vital implications for cognitive processes (p. 55). In his opinion, the evidence "about the power of different symbol systems" provided by psychologists and the work of neuroscientists concerning "the organization of the human nervous system" give a consistent view of "human mentation"; namely, that "a mind consists of a number of fairly specific and fairly independent computational mechanisms" (p. 56) (i.e., competences or intelligences). And it is quite likely, he continues

> that each of the intelligences has its own forms of plasticity and its own critical periods: these need not occur at the same time or for the same interval of time or entail the same costs and benefits. Indeed, if I may adopt the perspective termed "heterochrony," different neural systems may develop at different rates or in different ways, depending upon the period of primate evolution in which they began to function and the purposes to which they have been put. (p. 56)

The purpose for Gardner's consideration of neurobiology -- and the reason for giving a brief account of it here -- is that characteristics of the

human nervous system impact on the development of human intelligences. On the basis of his analysis, Gardner identifies "[p]rogramming, specificity," and "considerable early flexibility with some costs" as general principles of the nervous system, and he writes "we can reasonably expect these same principles to apply when we consider how normal human beings come to negotiate various intellectual challenges and to advance in diverse symbolic domains" (p. 57). There is evidence, he continues, for "functional units in the nervous systems" which suggests "a biological basis for specialized intelligences" (p. 57).

But N/nature alone cannot give us a complete understanding of the "kinds of cognition" manifest in human experience. Culture is also an important factor. "We cannot (even should we wish to)," Gardner (1983) writes, "neatly factor culture out of this equation, because culture influences every individual (except possibly some freaks) and will, therefore, necessarily color the way that intellectual potentials evolve from the first" (p. 57). So, according to Gardner, biological and cultural influences converge to shape the human intelligences (p. 58); it is nature and nurture together that form human cognitive abilities and symbolic capabilities.

At this point, it becomes necessary for Gardner to stipulate his prerequisites of an intelligence and this brings us closer to the relevance of his work with regard to what data count as for human communication specialists. Gardner writes that

> a human intellectual competence must entail a set of skills of problem solving -- enabling the individual to resolve genuine problems or difficulties that he or she encounters and, when appropriate, to create an effective product -- and must also entail the potential for finding or creating problems -- thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge. (pp. 60-61)

He states that the human intelligences he identifies "must be genuinely useful and important ... in certain cultural settings" (p. 61). In addition, he wants the "set of faculties" he identifies to be "empirically grounded," rather than a priori, and capable of accounting for "the skills of a shaman and a psychoanalyst as well as of a yogi and a saint" (p. 62).

These prerequisites established, Gardner then employs what he refers to as a "kind of 'subjective' factor analysis" (p. 63) to identify and discuss eight sources of information which provide the criteria or the "signs" for his set of human intelligences.

The first source Gardner mentions are the studies that investigate brain injury. Lesions to specific areas of the brain tell us much about the autonomy of human faculties. "The consequences of such brain injury," Gardner observes, "may well constitute the single most instructive line of evidence regarding those distinctive abilities or computations that lie at the core of a human intelligence" (p. 63).

Exceptional individuals (idiot savants, prodigies) are a second source of information about the characteristics of human intelligence. Gardner writes:

> To the extent that the condition of the prodigy or the idiot savant can be linked to genetic factors, or (through various kinds of non-evasive investigative methods) to specific neural regions, the claim upon a specific intelligence is enhanced. At the same time, the selective absence of an intellectual skill -- as may characterize autistic children or youngsters with learning disabilities -- provides a confirmation-by-negation of a certain intelligence. (pp. 63-64)

A third source of information about human intelligence is related to Gardner's (1983) belief that "an intelligence is the existence of one or more basic information-processing operations or mechanisms, which can deal with specific kinds of input" (p. 64). These information-processing capabilities may be "genetically programmed" and activated by internal and external information. Intelligence may exist as a "neural mechanism" or "computational system." If this is the case, Gardner writes, it becomes important "to be able to identify these core operations" (e.g., "sensitivity to pitch" or "ability to imitate movement"), "to locate their neural substrate, and to prove that these 'cores' are indeed separate" (p. 64).

A "distinctive developmental history" and a "definable set of expert 'end-state' performances" (p. 64) constitute a fourth way of identifying and assessing the human intelligences. Gardner believes than an intelligence should have a developmental history that is recognizable in normal as well as gifted persons, and that it is possible to identify levels of competence from novice to expert (p. 64).

Evolutionary evidence and plausibility are a fifth "sign" of an intelligence. "A specific intelligence becomes more plausible," Gardner writes, "to the extent that one can locate its evolutionary antecedents, including capacities (like bird song or primate social organization) that are shared with other organisms" (p. 65).

Two more sources of information about the human intelligences are experimental psychological tasks and psychometric findings. "[E]xperimental tasks," Gardner writes, "can provide convincing support for the claim that particular abilities are (or are not) manifestations of the same intelligences" (p. 65). Psychometric measures (like IQ tests), although heavily reliant on paper-and-pencil methods and difficult to interpret, permit important comparisons. "To the extent that psychometric results prove unfriendly to my proposed constellation of intelligences," Gardner observes, "there is cause for concern" (p. 66).

Finally, the eighth "sign" of an intelligence identified by Gardner is "susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system" (p. 66). Although Gradner believes that it may be possible for an intelligence to exist without symbolic expression, he also asserts the "a primary characteristic of human intelligence may well be its 'natural' gravitation toward embodiment in a symbolic system" (p. 66).

These eight criteria, then, are the ones Gardner uses to evaluate a human intelligence. Gardner also warns that the intelligences he identifies are convenient "fictions" for discussing human processes and abilities and that, like life itself, they "are continuous with one another" (p. 70). We may lapse into the "sin of reifying," he writes, as long as we remain mindful of what we are doing.

So, what are these "relatively autonomous human intellectual competences" identified, described, and discussed by Gardner? Listed, they are: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spacial, bodily-kinesthetic, and personal which Gardner divides into intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. Thus, according to his criteria, Gardner isolates seven basic intellectual competences manifest in the cognitive and behavioral natures of human beings.

Human communication specialists use all these abilities to make sense of symbolic life. In fact, it is obvious that Gardner's (1983) seven intelligences actually delineate contexts of communication study while simultaneously and reflexively providing the means for analysis and interpretation. Not only do researchers choose areas of study that are compatible with their intellectual inclinations, but also these intellectual inclinations color the sense that is made of communication phenomena. This simple realization returns us to Scheidel's remark (summary statement 12) about how the person of the researcher very often is the evidence and, let us add, strongly influences the manner in which it is interpreted -- a realization that can slip from awareness.

The utility of Gardner's intelligences for categorizing the various lines of inquiry in human communication study and reflexively providing the means of analysis and interpretation is easily suggested. For instance, it is evident that the personal and linguistic intelligences are paramont. Intrapersonal/interpersonal communication study are central concerns of our discipline. And linguistic intelligence or ability provides both a means for our investigations and an object of study. It is also clear by virtue of the numerous hypothetico-deductive investigations that logical-mathematical intelligence in an important influence in human communication inquiry. Furthermore, researchers in the area of nonverbal communication are principally concerned with spacial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. And even musical intelligence comes into play when attention is focused on the sentence song and its various paralinguistic characteristics such as inflection and rate, timbre and pitch.

Summary: What Do Data Count As?

It is not the intent of this essay, however, to unpack Gradner's discussion of the seven basic intelligences he identifies. More important for our purposes is the case he make for multiple intelligences per se, the idea that human beings possess a spectrum of cognitive and behavioral competences that engender a number of ways of knowing or making sense. Our review of Gardner's argument is to make a simple point: What data count as depends to a great extent upon the person doing the counting/accounting. Gardner brings us once again to the crucial importance of recognizing the researcher as the instrument of inquiry without making it solipsistic. The case he makes for distinct human intelligences is convincing and suggests how interpretive inquiry is typically idiosyncratic. Consequently, the idea of multiple intelligences is especially supportive of the interpretive approach to human communication study discussed in this essay in addition to providing an explanation for the diverse ways human communication researchers construe data. What data count as, then -- in contrast with what count as data -- does indeed appear to be less determined by the conventions of communication study than it is subject to the individual intelligences and inclinations of particular researchers.

Notes

1. I began thinking about these matters when I was asked to be the spokesperson for the interpretive approach to human communication study on a three-person panel examining the theory-research cycle. Program title: "What Counts As Data/What Data Count As." Western Speech Communication Association annual convention, Tucson, Arizona, February 1986.

2. One year later, Winter 1978, WJSC once again devoted an entire issue to the same question, but the articles in that issue will not be discussed here.

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